

To make America more competitive in the global economy, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act cuts our corporate tax rate from 35 percent—one of the highest rates in the developed world—to 21 percent. This is good news for workers. As more than 100 economists agreed in a recent open letter, “the question isn’t whether American workers are hurt by our country’s corporate tax rate—it’s how badly.”

Another expert put it this way in a recent op-ed: It is “the consensus view of professional economists” that “lowering corporate income taxes would increase the wages of workers.” Perhaps that is why reforming the corporate tax rate used to be a bipartisan goal. During the previous administration, prominent Democrats said they supported bringing our rate in line with our competitors overseas.

There may be a new occupant of the White House, but the need for reform has not changed. I hope our colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support this pro-growth, pro-worker policy.

It is no wonder that job creators are enthusiastic about what they will be able to accomplish when tax reform becomes law. I recently received a letter from the chief operating officer of a construction equipment dealer in my hometown of Louisville. This is a direct quote: “We’ll hire more employees and plan investments in our company that we weren’t considering prior to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.”

This bill will also help Americans by repealing a punitive tax at the very heart of ObamaCare. For low- and middle-income families who are suffering under the individual mandate tax—including many in my home State of Kentucky—repeal means relief. If the health insurance plans available under ObamaCare are not affordable or not desirable, the blame lies with that failing law, not with Americans who are already struggling to make ends meet. It is unfair and illogical to penalize them further because ObamaCare is failing to meet their needs. By erasing this individual mandate tax, we will give Americans both tax relief and healthcare flexibility—two things that ObamaCare failed to provide.

There is one more element of this bill that deserves special attention. It provides the Nation, and particularly the people of Alaska, with a tremendous opportunity to develop the State’s bountiful natural resources. In 1980 Congress set aside a particular non-wilderness area within Alaska’s National Wildlife Refuge for potential development of its oil and gas resources. This bill is our chance to finally make good on that promise, enhancing our country’s energy security and creating good-paying jobs in the process.

Unlocking the resources of this area will provide a boon to Alaska’s economy, but more broadly, it will also advance America’s standing as an energy superpower, helping to cut Americans’ energy costs and strengthening our national security.

For too long, special interests have stood in the way of responsible development. The people of Alaska have shown time and again that resource development can go hand in hand with environmental protection, and surface development will be limited to just one ten-thousandth of the total land in the reserve. It is long past time to finish what Congress started almost 40 years ago and to begin reaping the benefits of responsible development.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will deliver historic tax relief to American families. It will help put our country on a trajectory toward more innovation and better paying jobs. It will repeal an unfair tax at the center of ObamaCare and will help America achieve greater energy security.

So this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. I want to commend the work of Chairman HATCH, Chairman ENZI, and Chairman MURKOWSKI to bring it within reach. I urge all of our colleagues to join me in voting to approve the conference report and complete this victory for the American people.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12 noon, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The majority whip.

#### JOBS FOR OUR HEROES BILL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, the House will pass a bill today called the Jobs for Our Heroes Act, which I hope will be quickly signed into law by the President.

This bill streamlines a process by which Active-Duty military, reservists, and veterans can apply for commercial driver’s licenses. As the Presiding Officer knows, and as people may know generally, there is a shortage of people who can get a commercial driver’s license and fill these well-paying jobs.

This bill will also allow States to permanently waive license requirements for current servicemembers and National Guardsmen if they have military experience in driving comparable vehicles. That way, members of the military will not have to go through the same old rigmarole twice, wherein they get trained in the military, then get out, and the civilian world ignores the fact that they had been trained and had gotten qualified in the military. This bill fixes that.

I am honored to have a broad range of bipartisan support for this legislation. One would hope something like this would. I thank Congressman ROB WOODALL, who played a key role in helping to get this bill through the House.

I hope, with this bill being signed into law, more members of our military will be able to utilize the skills they acquired while they were in the military to be able to qualify for well-paying jobs in our communities. We continue to use our best efforts to keep faith with our veterans who have done so much for all of us.

#### TAX CUTS AND JOBS BILL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, the second matter I would like to address is the historic vote that the House will take today and that we will take later on this evening on the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

This bill will dramatically reduce taxes on American families and incentivize the creation of new jobs. It is a major victory for all Americans who want to know that Washington has their best interests at heart. It does exactly what we told the voters we would do in 2016, and it is important to keep our word. We are delivering tax reform in a way that is real, comprehensive, and substantial, and we are doing it through what we usually refer to as regular order in the Senate.

I know that ever since the Affordable Care Act was written in then-Democratic Leader Harry Reid’s conference room and was brought to the floor, there has been a lot of concern about the way the Senate conducts its activities. Senator MCCAIN, who unfortunately will not be able to be with us today, has been a stickler for returning to regular order—by that, meaning introducing a bill, having it marked up and debated in the relevant committee—in this case, in the Finance Committee—then having it brought to the floor, where it is amended, and then debating it until we finally pass it. Then we go to a conference committee with the House and reconcile the differences between the Senate version and the House version. That is exactly what we did with this piece of legislation.

I have spoken at length about certain provisions in the bill before, but I want to make one point abundantly clear. For the American people, this represents the very best kind of Christmas gift we can offer them—one that will actually make their lives better and one from which they will benefit right away. This tax reform may not bear the ribbons and bows of a Christmas present, but the men and women who are trying to make ends meet will benefit from having lower taxes, bigger paychecks, and a resurgent economy that will produce more jobs and better opportunities.

I will refer to an article that came out in January of this year which cited

a shocking statistic, really. The statistic is, most Americans remain one misstep away from having a financial crisis. Fifty-seven percent of Americans don't have enough cash on hand to cover an unexpected \$500 expense. These findings from this CBS News report shed light on how many households continue to struggle with their basic finances more than 7 years after the official end of the great recession of 2007. A typical American household still earns 2.4 percent below what it brought home in 1999. When people talk about less purchasing power and flat wages, that is what they are talking about.

At the same time, we know costs for essentials, such as housing and childcare, have surged faster than the rate of inflation, which puts even more stress on these household budgets. That is one of the reasons we will pass this conference report later on this evening—because we believe these families deserve to keep more of what they earn so as to make sure they don't go into debt when they suffer an unexpected financial expense of \$500, like the 57 percent of the respondents to the poll said they would, which was reported by CBS News. That is why it is a big deal.

For example, a typical family of four who earns the median family income of \$73,000 a year will receive a tax cut of \$2,058, which is a reduction of nearly 58 percent. Now, that may not seem like a big deal inside the beltway, but to those families who are living paycheck to paycheck and who cannot deal with unexpected financial expenses, this will help them in a real and meaningful way.

Consider the single mother—or father, for that matter—with one child and an annual income of \$41,000. That parent, that family, will receive a tax cut of \$1,304.50, which is a reduction of nearly 73 percent. This may be shocking news to most people who are listening because all they have heard about is what is bad in this bill.

There are a lot of very good things in this bill, but it could have been made better if our Democratic colleagues had worked with us rather than resisted us at every step along the way. I guess they are satisfied with the status quo—the fact that purchasing power for the average family is actually 2.4 percent below what it was in 1999. The message I would like to convey is, we are not satisfied with the status quo. We think life can be better, and one way it will be better is to start with letting people keep more of what they earn.

For a married small business owner with an income of \$100,000, he will receive a tax cut of \$2,603.50, which is a reduction of nearly 24 percent. So you can see, across all incomes and among people in very different circumstances, each of them will benefit from the bill we will pass tonight and send to the President.

This bill also does something for which Barack Obama had argued in

2011, that of having a bipartisan consensus formed to cut the corporate income tax rate. I know people aren't necessarily immediately attracted to the idea of cutting corporations' taxes, but the fact is, America has the highest corporate tax rate in the industrialized world. What that means is, it is cheaper for businesses to move to other countries, to invest in jobs there, and to keep the money overseas that they earn abroad. By reducing it to 21 percent, as we do in this bill, we will basically have achieved the average tax rate in the industrialized world, and we will move from a worldwide tax system to a territorial one. This really is a bipartisan consensus move.

When our Democratic friends criticize us for corporate giveaways, we are embracing the very same reforms they have advocated in the past, whether it is President Obama, Democratic leader Senator SCHUMER, or the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator WYDEN. All of them have advocated reducing the corporate tax rate and making our corporate business tax more competitive because they recognize, as we all recognize, the fact that the status quo kills jobs and encourages businesses to move overseas. We want to grow jobs in America, along with investment, and encourage those businesses to come back home.

I daresay that all Americans from every walk of life will benefit from this stimulus to our economy. Janet Yellen, who was last appointed Chairman of the Federal Reserve by Barack Obama, said that in part as a result of this tax package, the Federal Reserve has raised its projection on growth of the U.S. economy from 2.1 percent next year to 2.5 percent—four-tenths of 1 percent. That is a big deal.

Every American will feel the benefit of that economic growth in terms of the wages they earn, the opportunities they have, and their ability to protect themselves against unexpected financial expenses, as I mentioned earlier.

What could someone do with \$2,600 more in their paycheck? Well, you could install concrete countertops or laminate flooring in your house. When it comes to a cell phone—everybody seems to have a cell phone—you can pay your cell phone expense for 2½ years. You can go online at a Texas college and pay for your education for a full year. You can breathe a little bit easier in Dallas by having enough money to pay for 2 months of average apartment rent. You can drive down Interstate Highway 35 in Texas, knowing that almost 5½ months of an average car payment is taken care of. If you need a little dental work done, you can go to your dentist for a little tune-up and pay for that out of the savings you will achieve as a result of this bill.

Stories like these, stories of how busy, hard-working and multitasking Americans will benefit from our plan, simply leave me with confusion as to why our Democratic colleagues have simply refused to participate in this

process and have blocked and dragged their feet every step along the way, trying to stop us from providing this relief, from keeping our promise to the American people. It seems in the process they have given up on the American dream, they have settled for the status quo, and they are even rooting for failure.

This bill's final passage won't wait for our Democratic colleagues to wake up. We are simply determined to get this win even without them because American families need more take-home pay, they need higher wages, they need greater job opportunities, and they need a competitive economy and the benefits it brings. American families should not have to settle for anything less, and we will make sure they don't.

There is one more aspect of the bill I want to bring up. Our tax reform plan strengthens our long-term energy security by opening up an area in Alaska to responsible energy development. At the invitation of Senator MURKOWSKI, I traveled to the North Slope of Alaska about a year or so ago, and I am amazed at the technology they were able to deploy in extracting oil from the North Slope. They literally have ice roads that don't exist except during the coldest part of the year in order to protect the environment and allow equipment to travel overland. Thanks to directional drilling, they are able to occupy basically a very small footprint and literally drill hundreds of wells in a multitude of different directions and pump the energy from that location. It creates jobs, it creates wealth, and it helps create energy security for the people of Alaska and for the United States.

I come from a State with a huge energy presence, and I understand the importance of developing our natural resources responsibly. Limited development with modern technologies will not ruin this area, as some of the critics have charged, because a very small portion of the acreage is allowed. It will provide jobs.

Let's not forget why we are doing this. One reason we are increasing our domestic energy production is because we want to make ourselves less dependent on foreign energy sources. It also helps lower the price at the pump for millions of hard-working Americans.

So I can't wait to vote on this bill later today, and I can't wait to hand-deliver to the President's desk this important bill this week and for him to sign it into law. We will all benefit from passage of this Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, yesterday I went to Benito Juarez high school in Chicago, in the southwest part of the city, in the Pilsen neighborhood. It has a predominantly Mexican-American enrollment at this high school. It is one of my favorites. I have been there time and again for so many different events. It is full of life and full of some amazing young students and some great teachers and a great principal, Mr. Ocon. I was there 2 weeks ago for a mariachi band ensemble, training students across the city to be musicians in the Mexican tradition. There is so much life there.

But yesterday was not the happiest occasion. It was sad and worrisome. I met with about 20 of the students there, all of whom have been protected by DACA. DACA was President Obama's Executive order that was issued in 2012. That Executive order said that if you were brought to the United States as a child, an infant, a toddler, a young person, and grew up in this country undocumented; if you had no problems of any serious nature with the law; if you finished your education; if you went through a criminal background check and paid a fee, you would be protected and be able to stay in America 2 years at a time to go to school, to work, whatever your aspirations may be.

Under President Obama's Executive order, 780,000 young people came forward, and the 20 I met at Benito Juarez were among them. They got the protection they needed to legally get a job. For a lot of these young students, that is a critical part of their lives because, being undocumented, they don't qualify for any Federal assistance to go to college. If they want to go to college, they have to save up for it, and they have to find the money and work for the tuition and other expenses. So getting a job is a very important part of it.

These young people, as they went through the DACA process, knew that they were safe from being deported. That is a fear which many of us can't even understand, but it is a real fear for many people in this country who are here undocumented. So for these young people, they have that chance.

On September 5, President Trump announced he was ending the DACA protection program as of March 5 of next year, putting an end to the protection these young people have. As their DACA expires, they will be vulnerable to deportation. They will reach the point where they can no longer work in America.

The end of DACA as we know it will dramatically change the lives of thousands of young people. It will change the lives of 900 of these DACA-protected young people who volunteered to serve in our military—currently serving in our military, willing to risk their lives for a country that will not give them legal status. Imagine that for a moment. If they had to prove that

they really cared about America, what more could they do then to put their lives on the line? They have done it, 900 of them. When DACA goes away on March 5 of next year, they have to leave the military service. That is the end of their opportunity to serve America. Many of them are in the military because they bring special skills and special capacities to lead. We will lose them.

It will mean that 20,000 of these DACA-protected young people, when it goes away for them, will no longer be able to teach—20,000 teachers across America. I met one of them yesterday, Katherine Galeano. Katherine, whom I had met before, is a special-ed teacher. Her family originally came from Nicaragua. She told a heartbreaking story about what happened 10 years ago. She was in high school. She was taking a shower in the morning before she was to go to school. There was a knock on the bathroom door. Her mother was crying and screaming: "Come out. Come out." Katherine came out to see her father being handcuffed. They were deporting him to Nicaragua. He was gone. That was the last time he saw her and she saw him—10 years ago. As she told the story, she said that her mother tried to make it as a single mom with her kids here in the United States and finally gave up and went back to Nicaragua, leaving Katherine to raise herself, to pay her own way through college, to get a teaching certificate and teach special-ed in the city of Chicago. As of March 5 next year, Katherine is finished teaching. It is over. DACA is gone.

When I met with these students yesterday, you can imagine what they were worried about. They are worried about themselves and their future. They are worried about their families. They are worried about having turned over all this information to the government when they signed up for DACA which can now be used against them and their families. That is what they are worried about.

Many of them, I am sure, reflect on the fact that this could be their last Christmas in the United States of America. If that seems overly dramatic, then you need to meet them and talk to them and understand the reality of their lives. That is what they face.

While President Trump did prospectively eliminate the DACA Program, he issued a challenge to us. He said to Congress: Now do something. If I am going to eliminate this Executive order, what is Congress going to do in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives? Will you pass a law to deal with this challenge?

He said that in September, and here we are in the middle of December having done nothing—nothing—and the clock is ticking. It is a clock that means an awful lot to thousands of young people across America, including those at Benito Juarez high school in the city of Chicago.

There are people who want to get this fixed, Republicans and Democrats. We need to come together and get this done. There is no excuse for delay. We know what needs to be done. We need to give these young people a chance.

I introduced the DREAM Act 16 years ago here in the Senate, and the DREAM Act said to these young people: We are going to put you on a path to legalization and a path to citizenship. It won't be easy, and it won't be quick, and you will have to show us that you can be a productive part of America's future, but then we will give you your chance. These young people grew up in the United States of America, pledging allegiance to that flag, singing our national anthem, believing in their heart of hearts that this was home, but it really wasn't, legally. They were undocumented and illegal in America. Now the question is, What will we do to make that better, to fix it, to come up with a just solution?

Some of my Republican colleagues say: Well, you have to give us more than just fixing their problem; you have to give us some fix to our immigration system. I am not against that. I was part of a group of eight Senators who spent months together—four Democrats, four Republicans. We crafted a comprehensive immigration bill, which I am proud of. It passed on the floor of the Senate and was sent over to the Republican House of Representatives where they refused to even consider it. They would not bring it up for a vote. It died in the Republican House.

I know this immigration system in America is broken. I have talked about one specific piece of it this morning, but there are many aspects of it that are broken. The Republicans have said to us: Do something to make our borders stronger. Sign me up. I voted for that on the comprehensive immigration bill. Does that mean more technology, more equipment, making certain that it is clear that our border is going to be a real border that you cannot cross at will? Of course. I am prepared to do that, and many Democrats—maybe all the Democrats—would join in that effort. There are things that we can do to fix this system, but what we cannot do is ignore it. We cannot ignore what is happening to these young people, the threat to their future, to their families, and we can't ignore the reality that this is a basic test of who we are as Americans.

I stand here today as the son of an immigrant mother. My mom was brought to this country when she was 2 years old, and thank goodness my grandmother decided to put her on a boat, bring her from Lithuania to the United States. I wouldn't be here otherwise. That is my story, that is my family's story, and that is America's story. That is who we are. I cannot imagine my grandmother and grandfather, whom I never knew, making the decision to come to a country where they didn't even speak the language,